

Gods and Heroes of India

Grades 6-12

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Teacher Information Guide

The Cleveland Museum of Art Distance Learning Program

Gods and Heroes of India

Grades 6-12

Series Objectives:

1. Students will learn the characteristics of myth and understand how culture is revealed through the stories it tells.
2. Students will be introduced to the cultural and historical context of selected works of art and learn how art can tell a story.
3. Critical Attribute Lesson -- Students will be introduced to the characteristics of mythology and learn that ancient myths, legends, and stories:
 - can tell of natural events
 - can explain the creation of the world
 - are often fictional, and often meant to entertain
 - can explain ancient religion
 - can tell us about history
 - usually include gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines
 - sometimes teach moral lessons

Program Objectives:

- Students will learn about Hindu and Buddhist deities and their relationship to some of the heroes of the epic stories of India.
- Students will learn how works of art depict the gods and heroes discussed.

National Education Standards:

For Fine Arts - Visual Arts (grades 5-8, 9-12):

- Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes
- Understanding the Visual Arts in Relation to History and Cultures
- Making Connections Between Visual Arts and Other Disciplines

For Language Arts - English (grades K-12):

- Reading for Perspective
- Reading for Understanding
- Evaluation Strategies
- Communication Skills
- Communication Strategies
- Applying Knowledge

- Developing Research Skills
- Multicultural Understanding

For Social Sciences – World History (grades 5-12):

- Era 3: Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires 1000 BCE-300 CE

Program Description:

Through an examination of the legends of Hindu and Buddhist gods and heroes, students will learn about religious aspects of Indian culture. By using images from the museum's collection, this videoconference makes connections to history and culture and includes: the adventures of Rama and Hanuman in the Indian epic story, the Ramayana; the incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu as the man-lion Narasimha; and the Buddha of Compassion, Avalokiteshvara. The gods and heroes of Indian mythology are the primary focus.

Note: Please print out the Gods and Heroes of India Program Viewing Guide and make enough copies for each student. Bring these sheets to the videoconference site for students to use during the program

Prerequisites for Videoconference:

1. Students should be familiar with the stories of the Ramayana and complete the diagram for the story of Rama included with this packet before the distance learning lesson. They also should have some familiarity with Hinduism and Buddhism, so a brief summary is included. A list of print and electronic sources also appears at the end of this document.
2. Students should be acquainted with some of the specialized vocabulary used in the videoconference. See the vocabulary list that follows for these words and their definitions.
3. On a map, locate the Himalayan Mountains and the countries of India and Sri Lanka.

Vocabulary:

(These words are part of the distance learning lesson.)

Amitabha – the primordial Buddha whose name means “Infinite Light.”

Avatar – a deity (especially Vishnu) who descends to Earth, and assumes a human, animal, or other form. From the Sanskrit word for “descent.” Could also be called an incarnation, appearance, or manifestation of a god.

Bodhisattva – enlightened beings who postpone their entrance to Nirvana and become divine helpers.

Buddha – (literally Awakened One or Enlightened One,) is a title used in Buddhism for anyone who has discovered enlightenment (bodhi), although it is commonly used to refer to Siddhartha Gautama, the historical founder of Buddhism.

Buddhism – a religion that originated in India around the 6th to 4th centuries BC. It was inspired by the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who was born around 563 BC.

Deity – a god or goddess.

Dharma – one's duty or destiny, and also defines the concept of principles or laws that maintain order in the universe.

Hinduism – the world's third largest religion, and the main religion that is practiced in India. It was formed from many traditions, and has no single founder. Its roots date back to the Vedic religion of Ancient India, around 1500 BC.

Incarnation – a god or deity assuming a human, animal, or other form. (*See "Avatar"*)

Karma – the belief that a person's actions will have an effect on this life, or a reincarnation.

Mudra – a symbolic hand gesture in Hinduism and Buddhism. They are used in artwork, dance, and the practice of yoga.

Nirvana – literally means to "blow out" or extinguish the problems which cause suffering in our lives (such as desire, hate, and delusion.) "Blowing out" this fire allows someone to reach a peaceful state of mind, free from the endless cycle of "Samsara" (life, death, and rebirth), and the possibility of becoming a Buddha. Also called "Enlightenment" and "Awakening."

Oral tradition – the verbal transmission of cultural or historical information.

Ramayana – Indian epic tale of Prince Rama that was written by the Hindu sage, Valmiki, between the 5th and 4th century BC.

Rakshasas – "the malignant ones" – formed from the anger of Lord Brahma.

Reincarnation – the belief that one's soul is reborn into another body after death. Also called "transmigration."

Sage – a very wise person.

Sanskrit – a classical literary language of India.

Teaching Extensions:

1. Create a modern multi-armed being.

Materials needed: Paper, colored pencils, scissors.

Process:

- a) Students should each select a major city in the United States (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Santa Fe, Seattle, Nome, Honolulu, Cleveland, Detroit, etc.) and create a four-armed version of a make-believe god that might serve as a patron deity for the citizens of that city. In the same way that Vishnu, Shiva, and other deities hold various symbols and attributes, give your make-believe deity the appropriate symbols. For example, the Los Angeles deity might hold a parking meter (god of parking spaces), a sprinkler & hose (plenty of water); sunglasses, and an Oscar statuette (success in the movies).
- b) Have your students discuss their creations and explain the reasons for their choices of symbols and attributes.

2). Write a story.

Materials needed: Paper, pens.

Process:

- a) Review the story of Narasimha:
<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Narasimha> the writer of the story created a set of seemingly impossible circumstances for the hero of the story to overcome. The demon king believed he could not be harmed, but Vishnu found all the right loopholes and was able to defeat the evil king.
- b) The Hindu god Ganesha is the remover of obstacles. Identify a problem in the world today that seems to be impossible to solve and then write a short story about how Ganesha might take care of the problem.
 - i) Learn more about Ganesha. Go to
<http://www.asia.si.edu/pujaonline/puja/discussion.html#ganesha>.
On this webpage, young American Hindus talk about their religious beliefs. Ganesha is mentioned, a link to his image is provided, and the discussion ends by recounting one of his wise decisions.
<http://ganapati.perso.neuf.fr/anglais/amythes.html>
This website includes various myths about Ganesha.
 - ii) Remember, a good story has a beginning, middle and an end. The beginning is often called the introduction, the middle is the body of the story, and the end is the conclusion.
 - iii) Divide your paper into three parts by folding it horizontally to form the three sections. Label the top section as the introduction, the middle as the body, and the bottom part as the conclusion.
 - iv) The introduction should describe the problem. The body of the story should describe the struggle for a solution, and the conclusion should show how the solution takes care of the original problem.

Teacher Resources:

Bartlett, Sarah. *The World of Myths & Mythology: A Source Book*. London: Blandford, 1998

Basham, A. L. *The Wonder That Was India*. New York: Grove, 1954.

Boger, Ann C. and DeOreo, Joellen K. *Sacred India: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism*. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1985

Cunningham, Michael R., et al., *Masterworks of Asian Art*. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1998

Encyclopedia of World Mythology. New York: Galahad Books, 1975

Hoffman, Mary. *A First Book of Myths*. New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 1999.

Horowitz, Anthony. *Myths and Legends*. New York: Larousse Kingfisher Chambers, Inc., 1994.

Katz, Brian P. *Deities and Demons of the Far East*. New York: Metro Books, 1995

Keenan, Sheila. *Gods, Goddesses and Monsters – An Encyclopedia of World Mythology*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 2000.

Philip, Neil. *The Illustrated Book of Myths – Tales and Legends of the World*. New York: DK Publishing, 1995.

Seeger, Elizabeth. *The Ramayana*. New York: William R. Scott, Inc., 1969

Website Resources:

<http://www.asia.si.edu/explore/default.asp>

This web page provides links to topics related to Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as resources for educators.

Mythology of India Quiz

Answer the following questions taken from the Distance Learning lesson. You can check your responses with the answer key.

1. Which of the following is **not** a characteristic of Indian mythology?
 - a. the same god can have different names
 - b. gods can only help other gods
 - c. gods can take different forms
 - d. different gods can hold the same symbols

2. What is a mudra?
 - a. a place of worship
 - b. a place to store food
 - c. a place for washing
 - d. a symbolic hand gesture

3. What is a bodhisattva?
 - a. a spirit who represents the features of nature
 - b. a Hindu god or goddess
 - c. a sacred flower
 - d. a divine helper

4. Which of the following is Rama's quest?
 - a. slay the golden deer
 - b. bring back Sita from Lanka
 - c. capture the Indian monkey
 - d. destroy the bridge to Ravana's island

5. Which of the following does **not** describe Ravana, the Hindu demon?
 - a. he had great powers
 - b. he caused his own downfall
 - c. he was cheated of his throne
 - d. he was annoying all of the gods and spirits

6. Indian artists made works of art based on stories from the Ramayana. These works of art were made for all of the following reasons except:

- a. for use as sacred lamps
- b. for religious purposes
- c. for public devotion
- d. for private devotion

7. What is a sage?

- a. a tool used in the lost-wax technique of metal-working
- b. the bearer of wisdom
- c. a jewelry or cosmetics box
- d. a type of shrub native to Northern India

8. The hero who helped Rama in his quest was:

- a. Harriman
- b. Hanuman
- c. Henry II
- d. Homer

9. In Hindu mythology, demons formed from the anger of Lord Brahma are called:

- a. the Rakshasas
- b. the Panamhas
- c. the Lares
- d. the Gorgons

10. The Avalokiteshvara story reveals some aspects of Buddhist philosophy. Which of the following is not part of Buddhist belief?

- a. a deity can appear in many manifestations
- b. the same deity can have a peaceful face and a wrathful face
- c. Buddhist deities are always shown with four arms
- d. the Dalai Lamas of Tibet are incarnations of Avalokiteshvara

Mythology of India Quiz - Answer Key

Here are the answers and explanations to the quiz:

- 1.**b.** Hindu gods and spirits have many interactions with each other, but in Hindu mythology, there is a great deal of interaction between gods and humans.
- 2.**b.** A mudra is a symbolic hand gesture.
- 3.**d.** A bodhisattva is a divine helper, an enlightened being who has chosen to delay entrance into Nirvana in order to help all other beings attain enlightenment.
- 4.**b.** Rama's quest was to go to Lanka and rescue his wife, Sita, from the palace of Ravana, the demon king.
- 5.**c.** It was the hero Rama, not Ravana, who was cheated of his throne through the trickery of his mother.
- 6.**a.** Hindu sculptures were made for the purpose of worship in a number of contexts, but not for use as lamps.
- 7.**b.** A sage is the bearer of wisdom.
- 8.**b.** Hanuman was the monkey hero who helped Rama defeat Ravana and rescue Sita.
- 9.**a.** In Hindu mythology, demons formed from the anger of Lord Brahma are called Rakshasas.
- 10.**c.** As in Hindu tradition, gods and deities can be given any number of arms to display identifying symbols.

Distance Learning at the Cleveland Museum of Art
Prerequisite Materials for Gods and Heroes of India

"Rama and Hanuman Rescue Sita" from the Ramayana

This is one of the greatest stories from India's epic poem, the Ramayana. It tells the tale of Prince Rama, his wife Sita, and the heroic monkey general named Hanuman.

Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, kidnapped Sita and held her captive. His exploits were assisted by his demons, called Rakshasas, who were formed from the anger of Lord Brahma. Ravana was the scourge of all creation. He felt free to cause trouble anywhere in the universe -- on earth, in the heavens, and even in the Underworld -- because no matter what he did, he could never be killed, or so he thought. He believed he could not be harmed because he had been given a special gift from Brahma, the creator god, which guaranteed that he could not be destroyed by any god or any demon.

The Ramayana tells the story of how Ravana is defeated by Lord Rama and his armies.

After years of being tormented by the demon king Ravana and his Rakshasas, all the gods and spirits of the land, and the sea, and the air complained to Lord Brahma, the god of creation. They asked that something be done to stop Ravana and to end all the suffering he was bringing into the world.

The god *Vishnu*, whose job it is to preserve and protect the world, offered his help. Lord Vishnu, who embodies compassion, mercy and goodness, volunteered to become a human in order to defeat Ravana.

At that moment down on earth, the king of Koshal was making sacrifices in order to have a son -- so the gods prepared a potion for the king's wives which caused them to give birth to sons that possessed the divine nature of Vishnu. The most honored wife of the king was given the largest share of the potion and gave birth to a beautiful son, Rama, who became the most powerful incarnation of Vishnu.

As a young prince, Rama was cheated of his throne, but he and his semi-divine brother Lakshman trained to become great warriors and they were given divine weapons that could be summoned to defeat any demon. Prince Rama was destined to defeat Ravana with the help of his brother Lakshman, and a monkey general named Hanuman.

But it was Ravana, the demon king himself, who planted the seeds of his own destruction in his desire for Rama's beautiful wife Sita. One day, Ravana sent a demon disguised as a golden deer to lure Rama away from Sita. While Rama was away, Ravana kidnapped Sita and took her back to Lanka in his flying chariot.

In their search for Sita, Rama and Lakshman enlisted the help of the great monkey Sugriva, son of the Sun god, and a monkey general named Hanuman. Hanuman, and his monkey allies were the children of the gods and spirits who had originally asked Brahma to destroy Ravana and so they had magical powers. These monkeys could perform magic, change their shape at will, and could fly in the air like eagles.

Hanuman learned that Sita was being held by Ravana on the island of Lanka, just off the southern tip of India. To liberate her, Hanuman called his monkey army and he and Rama set off for Lanka. They were stopped at the water's edge, as they sought ways to cross over to Lanka. The monkey army built a stone causeway to the island and attacked the demons there. The battle raged on with many casualties on each side. As a last resort, Ravana sent his son, Indrajita, to fight Rama and the monkeys. Ravana's son, Indrajita, was a great warrior with magical powers and soon Rama and the monkey soldiers were lying wounded beneath a shower of the demons' arrows.

But Hanuman used his powers to leap to a mountain top in the Himalayas that contained healing herbs. Hanuman brought back the whole mountain top and used the herbs to revive Rama and the monkey army. With their strength restored, Rama, Lakshman and the monkeys renewed their attack. Lakshman defeated Indrajita, and the monkeys overran the demon troops.

Ravana charged Rama in his flying chariot, but Rama summoned the most powerful of his divine weapons, Brahma's arrow. The arrow pierced Ravana's chest and he tumbled to the ground. In his dying breaths, Ravana praised Rama, recognizing that he was no ordinary man.

Rama goes on to rescue Sita and they all live happily ever after... almost. But that's another story.

Prerequisite Summary for Gods and Heroes of India

An Introduction to the Gods of Hinduism and Buddhism

Hinduism, currently the largest religion in India, was the main faith for hundreds of years. In the 6th century BC, another religious philosophy called Buddhism took hold in India. There are many similar ideas expressed in Hindu and Buddhist literature, including the idea of gods coming to earth to ease the suffering of humans.

In the Hindu faith, it is usually Vishnu, the savior and protector, who comes to the aid of those in need. Vishnu is known by as many as 24 different names and is believed to have taken at least 10 different forms (incarnations), including Rama and Narasimha.

In Buddhism, it is Avalokiteshvara (ah-val-oh-kit-tesh-VAR-uh) who comes to the aid of those who suffer. Just like Vishnu, he appears in many forms. In Nepal and in Tibet (where he is known as Chenresig) there are 108 different manifestations of this savior god of mercy and compassion. Many Buddhist religious stories emphasize the need to strive for peace and compassion.



BRAHMA
Hindu
Trait: creator



VISHNU
Hindu
Trait: preserver/protector



SHIVA
Hindu
Trait: destroyer



BUDDHA
Buddhist
Trait: an individual who achieves enlightenment and enters a state of Nirvana.

NIRVANA
A state of timeless and formless existence; eternal happiness.



AVALOKITESHVARA
Buddhist
Trait: enlightened divine helpers who postpone Nirvana to assist others.

Prerequisite Diagram for Gods and Heroes of India

Diagram the **Story** of **Rama**

Answer the questions and fill in the blank boxes to diagram the characters and plot of *The Ramayana*, or story of Rama.



Clue: Which Hindu god helped the divine monkeys?

Describe this god below:

Clue: Which Hindu god became human?

Clue: Which king did this god help?
AKA Rama's father.

MOST HONORED WIFE

Clue: Who was Rama's monkey general?
Describe his role in the story:

PRINCE RAMA

Clue: Prince Rama's wife.
What happened to her?

Clue: Who was Rama's semi-divine brother?
What was his role in the story?

RAVANA

Clue: Who were his demons?

Clue: What was the name of his son?

INDRAJITA

Viewing Guide

Gods and Heroes of India program viewing guide

Hero:	<i>Create your own</i>	Rama	Narasimha	Avalokiteshvara
Duty or quest:				
Special power:				
Positive trait/ strength:				
Adversary/foe:				
How was the duty or quest fulfilled?				

Compare & Contrast:

1. How are Rama and Narasimha similar and different?
2. How are Narasimha and Avalokiteshvara similar and different?



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Selected Images



Sita in the Garden of Lanka, From the Ramayana epic of Valmiki, India, Pahari, Guler, 18th century, c. 1725, 1966.143



Monkey General Hanuman

South India, Chola period (900-13th Century)

c. 1000

1980.26



Ganesha

South India, Chola period (10th-13th century)

c. 1070

1970.62



Nataraja, Shiva as the King of Dance
South India, Chola period (900-13th Century)
11th century
1930.331



Eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara
Western Tibet, Kashmiri style, 11th century
mid-11th century
1975.101